



Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 155

PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE -- THE TIME IS NOW (PART 4)

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT EDUCATION

There are many sources to seek education on investing. In today's world of exploding internet information, there is never any reason to be an uninformed consumer. Technology has brought the power of financial management knowledge, once just the domain of professional money managers, to everyone's home PC or desk top.

Sites that consider the special situations of military members and their families:

The Lifelines web site discussed in FV 87 is accessed through: <http://www.lifelines2000.org> where a considerable amount of financial information can be found.

The Air Force has a great site: <http://afcrossoads.com> with links to other financial information sites.

United Services Automobile Association (members only site): <http://www.usaa.com>. All officers and enlisted members may join USAA. The USAA Financial Planning Network (FPN) offers affordable, personalized financial advice and the tools to help members prioritize financial and personal goals by addressing planning issues such as consumer debt, retirement, estate planning, college planning, investments and insurance coverage.

The USAA Educational Foundation: <http://www.usaaedfoundation.org> offers many free financial materials and services supported by this non-profit organization, besides a considerable amount of web-based information for both the general public and specifics for the military family. Course materials that can be used by individuals or in a classroom setting are available. Commands can contact the foundation to arrange free financial seminars for their people and families.

Navy Mutual Aid Association: <http://www.navymutual.org>. This site provides tailored services applicable to military families. For instance, Emma's Baseline Service is a financial planning baseline that takes into account military pay and benefits, not usually recognized by most of the financial planning sites. The Baseline Service helps those approaching active duty retirement make decisions about the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and other financial planning matters by developing projections of the entitlements that will be in place following retirement.

First Command (formally United Service Planning Association): <http://www.firstcommand.com/>. Personally tailored financial plans to the military family.

The **American Association of Individual Investors** (AII) specializes in providing education in the area of stock investing, mutual funds, portfolio management and retirement planning. They are a not-for-profit organization that arms investors with the knowledge and tools needed to manage their finances effectively and profitably. They have a monthly magazine and offer self-study courses and seminars around the country: <http://www.aaii.com>.

The magazine *MONEY* tested fund-company websites that cater best to their investors. Here's three they recommended:

Best investor education: Vanguard. <http://www.vanguard.com>. Especially check out Vanguard's tutorial -- called the Vanguard University -- with straightforward explanations of expenses, risk, asset allocation and virtually every major investing topic imaginable. An excellent book worth reading, especially before you decide to jump into mutual funds, is "Common Sense on Mutual Funds - New Imperatives for the Intelligent Investor," by John C. Bogle, senior chairman and founder of the Vanguard Group.

Best asset-allocation tool: American Century. <http://www.americancentury.com>. The Fund Advisor provides a detailed allocation and savings plan with recommendations of funds that are tailored to meet your own home-buying, education or retirement goals.

Best fund screener: Fidelity. <http://www.fidelity.com>. The Fund Evaluator lets you search according to a wide range of criteria.

The magazine *MUTUAL FUNDS* reviewed and rated the following web sites for their planning advice:

Direct Advice: <http://www.directadvice.com>. Provides easy, fast data entry and navigation and advice on many topics pops up automatically; there is a service cost.

American Century Funds Advisor: <http://www.americancentury.com>. Provides specific, multi-portfolio advice; encourages users to plan for distinct goals; no cost.

Vanguard Total Planning: <http://www.vanguard.com>. Provides "solve" tool that offers a variety of ways to fix shortfalls; free if you hold a Vanguard account.

Financial Engines: <http://www.financial.com>, Morningstar ClearFuture: <http://www.morningstar.com>, and Fidelity: <http://www.fidelity.com/retirement> all provide good retirement planning.

Founders: <http://www.founders.com>. Especially good for figuring minimum required distributions for IRAs.

Quicken: <http://www.quicken.com/retirement/planning>. Provides suite of 10-minute planning tools, with a special college tool that provides for pulling up tuition for most colleges and universities.

T. Rowe Price: <http://www.troweprice.com/college>. Provides one of the best college planning sites with links to outside resources.

Web sites that are especially helpful for the financial education of children:

Jump\$Start Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy: <http://www.jumpstartcoalition.org>.

National Center for Financial Education (now part of SpringBoard Network): <http://www.ncfe.org>.

Strongkids.com: <http://www.strongkids.com>.

Treasury's Page for Kids: <http://www.ustreas.gov/kids>.

YoughBiz.com: <http://www.youngbiz.com>.

Young Investor: <http://www.younginvestor.com>.

More web sites that provide money management and investment education:

<http://www.mfmag.com>

<http://www.indexfunds.com>

<http://www.smartmoney.com>

<http://www.moneycentral.msn.com/>

<http://www.strong.com>

Furthermore, there are numerous magazines worth at least occasionally reading. These include *MONEY*, *SMART MONEY* and *MUTUAL FUND MAGAZINE*.

Other sources of education:

AMTCM Tom Justice, Leading Chief Petty Officer ATC Mobile, AL highly recommends the book "The Idiots Guide for Financial Management" as especially helpful.

CDR Michael B. Cerne, Chief, Fisheries Law Enforcement, CG HQ's recommends a useful reference -- the 2001 "Financial Planning Guide for Military Personnel." It contains information on planning, allowances, retirement, health benefits, social security, SBP, VA, insurance, investments, taxes, civil service, and wills. Its available from Financial Services Publishing Company (703) 706-5971.

Regards, FL Ames

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The Retired Officers Association (TROA) Offers Personalized Tricare for Life (TFL) Information

TROA is offering a new free service called the TFL Personal Profile, which provides specific TFL information tailored to the personal situation of a specific TFL beneficiary.

TROA already has put out lots of information on the new TFL benefits that will be coming to Medicare-eligibles enrolled in Medicare Part B, starting October 1. A 16-page brochure sent to every member with an issue of The Retired Officer Magazine.

There are lots of possible issues, and it's easy to get "information overload" if you have to wade through lots of verbiage that doesn't apply to your individual situation. TROA built the TFL Personal Profile to fill the need of finding the specifics that fit your personal situation.

Simply by completing a nine-item questionnaire, you can view a personal summary from TROA describing how TFL will work for you. You can print your TFL Personal Profile for handy reference, then have your spouse or friends complete the survey to see how TFL will apply to their circumstances.

The service is free, and it's available to all TFL beneficiaries - TROA members or not. Your questionnaire answers are confidential. TROA's TFL Personal Profile is at <http://www2.troa.org/TFLProfile>.